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THE HEART OF YOUTH

—
HERMANN HAGEDORN





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THE HEART OF YOUTH

BY HERMANN HAGEDORN

The Silver Blade. A one-act play in verse. Out of print.

The Woman of Corinth. A tale in verse. Out of print.

A Troop of the Guard and Other Poems. Out of print.

Poems and Ballads.

Faces in the Dawn. A novel.

Makers of Madness. A war play.

IN PREPARATION:

The Heart of Youth and Other Poems.



The Still Thunder



By
Hermann Hagedorn

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1915

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P. S.

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To
“ MRS. JOHN ”

Not with swords, not with guns,
Mother of boys, you arm your sons.
East and west, south and north,
With a word in their ears, you send them forth;
With a word you gird their souls
For storms and starry goals,
And send them over the lands
With a torch, a torch in their hands.

NOTE

“The Heart of Youth” was written for the dedication of the Dell Theatre at the Hill School, in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, and performed for the first time on the evening of June 6, 1915, with the following cast:

Fra Angelo	<i>William A. Hanway</i>
Rabelin	<i>George T. Achelis</i>
The Duke	<i>Louis C. Raegener, Jr.</i>
Arabis	<i>Gerald F. Sweeney</i>
Althæa	<i>Cornelius P. Trowbridge</i>
Melissa	<i>Horace M. Carleton</i>
A Physician	<i>R. Wolcott Hooker</i>
A Page	<i>Sheldon Abbett</i>
A Man on Crutches	<i>Herbert R. Reif</i>
A Monk	<i>Lewis M. Billingslea</i>
A Boy	<i>Thomas Denny, Jr.</i>
The Master in Charge	<i>Mr. John A. Lester</i>

CHARACTERS

FRA ANGELO.

RABELIN, *his companion.*

THE DUKE.

ARABIS, *his daughter.*

ALTHLEA }
MELISSA } *her friends.*

A PHYSICIAN.

A PAGE.

A MAN ON CRUTCHES.

A MONK.

A BOY.

HANDMAIDENS.

PAGES.

MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

THE MASTER IN CHARGE

OF THE PERFORMANCE.



SEQUENCE OF SCENES

SCENE I. *A forest.*

SCENE II. *A public square.*

SCENE III. *A dark street.*

SCENE IV. *A room in the palace.*

THE HEART OF YOUTH

PROLOGUE

(The MASTER IN CHARGE, without hat, coat or waistcoat and with the sleeves of his shirt rolled up, appears at back of stage. He is evidently very hot and somewhat exhausted and out of temper. Even before he appears he may be heard calling impatiently to two boys who are quarrelling unseen, but distinctly audible, in the gulley behind the stage.)

THE MASTER IN CHARGE

Come, come now! Stop your jabber. Stop, *stop*,
STOP!

D'ye think those pretty girls and their mammas
Have come to listen to you, jabbering
Behind the wings? Louis, if you don't quit
Rough-housing Bill this very minute, I'll —
What difference if Bill did steal your towel?

THE HEART OF YOUTH

Steal George's, Gerald's, anybody's. Oh!
If you were only now professionals
I'd have the fun at least of firing you!
But amateurs! Never again, I swear!
If there is anything inside this shirt
Able to profit by experience,
I wash my hands of amateurs henceforth.
Come, play the game. Do, for the love of Mike.
Pretend it's football — anything but Art,
And take a brace, so we can start the show.
Come, now, and stop your nonsense. Up this way.
(To the audience, as he comes forward mopping his brow.)
They're amateurs. And, worse than that, they're
boys.
God knows if there'll be any play to watch.
(A number of Boys appear at the back and hesitatingly come forward, one by one, as the MASTER IN CHARGE introduces them.)
Well, here they come, prepared to make their bow.
Bow, William. This is William. He's to play
The saint, the wandering good man. This is
George.
(In a whisper.)

PROLOGUE

Stand up, for heaven's sake, and be a man.
He plays the hero-villain, Rabelin.
You've heard it said, Art is economy.
Well, we've economized. Like life itself
We've thrown our good and evil in one pot
And saved one acting rôle, creating thus
A Rabelin too virtuous to hang,
Too wicked to exalt in other ways,
Who knows? — perhaps a man like me — or George.
Watch him! His fault is that he tries to heal
Ere he himself is healed. You know the kind.
Perhaps you've met him — in the looking-glass.
Run along, George. Come, Wolcott. This young
man
Is our Physician. He looks wise, and talks.
Herbert's our Cripple, Sheldon is our Page,
Whose vice is that he sleeps when he should watch,
A thing some folk are prone to. Here's Cornelius —
Althæa in the play. Melissa here
Goes down to glory with the name of Horace.
Bow, Louis. He's our Duke, straight from Illyria —
Stern parent of a sixteen-year-old girl,
Spite of his obviously tender years.
And here is Gerald, the fair maid herself,

THE HEART OF YOUTH

As muscular a Princess, take my word,
As ever bloomed in gardens. Ah, but wait!
We'll have her dying soon, and pale as death;
And Rabelin with horror in his eyes,
Crying, "Relent! Oh, punish me no more —"
But that's our story.

*(The Boys have one by one edged over to the right
and disappeared.)*

Well, you've seen our players,
And laughed at them a bit; and that was right.
For they were only boys in paint and wig,
Meant to be laughed at, boys like other boys,
Your boys and mine. But once the play begins
Forego the laughter. They are ours no more.
The little while you sit upon this slope
And watch our story like deep waters flow
Before your eyes, now calm, now full of storm,
They are not of this world. A little while
They put their souls to sleep, and lend to ghosts
From other worlds the bodies that are theirs.
They do not act, they *are* the Saint, the Duke,
The hero-villain, the fair, fragile maid,
Real for the moment of our pageantry
As love and faith and God's hand in the dark —

PROLOGUE

Spirits made flesh, not boys, but visions ! Ah !
Not boys, but dreams ; not words, but Truth ; not
man,
But something mightier, commanding man,
Alone can fitly dedicate this stage,
This church — where not in unctuous brocade
Prinked and emblazoned for the sight of heaven,
But nakedly in combat, stripped of sham,
Man talks with God. Let spirits dedicate
What is the spirit's ! In the name of Truth !

(*With an emphatic gesture.*)

Now let the curtain rise !

(*He turns as though to leave the stage, hesitates and turns again to the audience.*)

You smile. The curtain ? Let the curtain rise ?
Who speaks of curtains in this open dell
Of cool, green turf and unperturbéd waters ?
What curtain is there here to rise or fall ?
Ah, there are hundreds ! On *your* eyes they lie —
The curtains which the busy weaving men,
We call the years, have woven of your thoughts.
You said that thoughts were nothing. What a web
Have now the weavers made of that thin silk
The spider-brain spun of the love of things

THE HEART OF YOUTH

The eye could see, the ear could hear, the hand
Could finger, squeeze and claw. Ah, what a web
Of gray, inconsequential-seeming threads!

The modish thoughts, the meat-and-money
thoughts —

In webs, in webs, in iron curtains, proof
Against whatever fires of poesy
Burn in white aspirations from our lines,
They hang between us and your inner eyes,
Those better eyes, the pure eyes of the soul.

Lift up the curtain! For an hour lift up
The veil that holds you prisoners in this world
Of coins and wires and motor-horns, this world
Of figures and of men who trust in facts,
This pitiable, hypocritic world
Where men with blinkered eyes and hobbled feet
Grope down a narrow gorge and call it life.
Lift up the curtain! Gaze upon *our* world.
Look! Are there cedars here, a fence beyond,
A pond, a football field, an ugly mass
Of huddled roofs behind that poplar-row?
Lift up the curtain! We are in a wood
Above a city in Illyria.

PROLOGUE

The time is twilight. From the hills, the Saint
Comes with his young disciple; in the town
The people wait. Hush! You can hear the bell
Calling their hope across the golden eve.
The dusk is full of peace. You would not dream
That in the town a Princess perishes
For love of God, and on these hills, a boy
Struts gaily toward disaster. Look, what heights?
What deeps, break on your eyes, what heavens, what
 hells
In the small orbit of the heart of youth?
Lift up the curtain! Let the play begin.

SCENE I

A FOREST

(*From the right enter FRA ANGELO, a tall friar in a white cowl. He is accompanied by RABELIN, a boy of seventeen in mediæval garb.*)

FRA ANGELO

Look, Rabelin. Our journey nears its end.
There lies the city, slumbering in the dusk.
So beautiful it is, so calm, so mute,
So open to God's gaze, you would not guess
How the bees hum and labor in the hive
And love and kill and die. So many roofs,
And under each the struggle and the pain;
Youth reaching out, and old age falling back;
Youth, hoping; age, remembering; each at strife
With earth and heaven, scarce knowing why he
strives.
So many roofs, so many tragedies

SCENE I

Of unfulfilled existences.

The sun

Plays with gay magic on the fretted dome.

Look, with what reckless generosity

He strews his gems. That flash was from a pan

In some poor drudge's hand; that running light

Broke from a sudden ripple on the stream,

Raised by the first puff of the evening breeze.

How soft the night falls on those far, dark hills.

Like an inaudible, blue wave it breaks

Along the horizon's edge. The valley mists

Rise up like foam. Wait. Soon upon the deep

The white sails shall appear, the silver sails

That carry cargoes through sidereal seas

For the immortal venturers of heaven.

I shall be glad to see the stars again.

RABELIN

You are a strange man when the stars come out.

I know you while the sun shines. Now and then

I almost dare to laugh at you as though

You were a human being like myself.

But when the stars come out, you make me think

Of mountains and enormous ghosts that tower

THE HEART OF YOUTH

To heaven and make me shiver and feel small.
I don't much like to think of things like that.

FRA ANGELO

Are you afraid of me?

RABELIN

Not now. You have
A dear and human way with you by day,
A way of being near. I never thought
A good man could be such a friend. I'm sure
You're pleasanter than ordinary saints.
And yet, at twilight, when the stars come out,
You frighten me. You seem so far away.

FRA ANGELO

The stars are friends of mine.

RABELIN

Yes, that's the joke.
You're human, but you have such queer ideas.
If you were only now like other men,
Why, with your reputation as a saint,
Your holiness, and that odd gift of yours
Of making sick men well and bad men good —
Heaven knows what eminence you might attain.

SCENE I

You ought to be the Pope, you might be King;
If you would do as much as lift your hand,
You could be richer than a duke, with gold
And jewelry and robes of scarlet silk — —.

FRA ANGELO

Gold must have guardians, jewels must have locks,
Clothes must have roofs to shield them from the
weather.

Such things are nothing if they are not all.
It is a matter of the eyes; and mine
See heaven's gold and have no taste for earth's.

RABELIN

You are a holy man and I am not.
There lies the trouble. You don't care a rap
For gems and gold and scarlet things to wear.
I do, like every gentleman of taste.
I think I must have noble blood somewhere,
For I have feelings for life's higher things
That as a rule only a noble has,
Fine linen and such things. You wear a cowl
And under that a rope and that is all.

THE HEART OF YOUTH

You think that's saintly. Well, I think it's just
A little narrow, I might almost say
A little cowardly, as though you feared
That your religion might not stand the strain
Of silk on Sundays.

FRA ANGELO

Something might be said
About the cowardice that hides in cowls.
But I prefer a cowl.

RABELIN

That's your affair.
I'll not dispute you have a free man's right
To your own kind of clothes. But I assert
You have no right to keep from me the means
To clothe myself in silks if I so wish.

FRA ANGELO

What have I done?

RABELIN

What have you done? Last night
You healed a rich man's son, you raised him up
When he was gone almost, and when they brought

SCENE I

Gold to repay you, you rejected it !
That was your business, that was your affair
If you refused the wherewithal to give
Drink to the orphan, to the widow meat.
Oh, I'll admit that was your own affair,
Though I've my notions of its saintliness ! —
But when they turned and offered me their gold,
Saying, "Your friend is young, he wears no cowl,
Some day perhaps he may have need of gold,"
And you refused to let me take their gift,
That, I declare, was holiness gone mad.

FRA ANGELO

A week ago your thoughts were all of heaven.
Why are they turned so suddenly to earth ?

RABELLIN

Oh, I am sick of this religious buncombe.
I think and think and don't get anywhere.
Things you can see, things you can touch and smell,
Those are the things I seem to want — real things,
Substantial things that you can weigh. God knows
If there is any God. I'm sure I don't.
But there *is* money and there's power and place —

THE HEART OF YOUTH

FRA ANGELO

If you wish money there are many ways
That money may be sought. Why do you, then,
Follow a wandering madman through the hills?

RABELIN

Heaven knows.

FRA ANGELO

I never urged you, Rabelin.
You came to me. I did not ask you whence,
Nor why you came.

RABELIN

I came from dice and taverns.

FRA ANGELO

So wicked and so young!

RABELIN

Oh, laugh! You think
I'm just a boy. You never would believe
How bad I was.

FRA ANGELO

(*Warmly.*)

No.

SCENE I

RABELIN

Well, then, don't blame me
When you discover what a devil I am.
Sometimes I fear I'll be an atheist.

FRA ANGELO

But you were such a fire of faith.

RABELIN

I know.

I swallowed everything, hook, bait and sinker.
Now half of it seems childish, and the rest
Old women's talk, not meant for grown-up men.

FRA ANGELO

Perhaps when you have lived —

RABELIN

But I *have* lived.

You don't quite realize what I've been through.
I've passed through terrible temptations. I'm
Not like those other boys who don't know life.
I'm different. I've seen things. Oh, I have.
I wouldn't for the world upset your faith —

THE HEART OF YOUTH

FRA ANGELO

I understand.

RABELIN

But *my* experience

Has taught me that there isn't much worth while
Except success. When you've got that, you've
got it.

It isn't like this moonshine talk of God
You can't clutch anywhere but like an eel
It slips between your fingers. By and by,
When I begin to heal —

FRA ANGELO

To heal?

RABELIN

Why not?

FRA ANGELO

I must be getting old, and my mind weak.
I can't quite seem to follow your swift flights.
Did you say — heal?

RABELIN

Why, yes.

SCENE I

FRA ANGELO

But you're a sceptic!

RABELIN

Of course. But then the sick folk won't know that.
I've watched you heal. It doesn't seem so hard.
Some day I'll learn the trick, and when I do,
You bet, I'll not refuse a rich man's gift.

FRA ANGELO

So? So? A trick?

RABELIN

Well, something like a trick.

FRA ANGELO

Is that the reason why you cleave and cling,
To learn my trick? A trick, a juggler's trick! —
And turn it into goblets and fine linen?

RABELIN

I've made you angry.

FRA ANGELO

Yes, you strike at God
When you strike at His work.

THE HEART OF YOUTH

RABELIN

It's your work.

FRA ANGELO

No.

RABELIN

Well, I suppose you're through with me for good.
I'm sorry and — I swear — I meant no harm.
I've followed you because I cannot help
But follow. There is something in your eyes.
I love you, and I follow. That is all.

FRA ANGELO

Give me your hand. I love *you*, Rabelin.

RABELIN

You were young once. You know the fires that
burn
Inside a fellow. Oh, I can't explain.
I hate myself, and everything, but you,
And somehow, you're the one of all the world
I'm meanest to. I don't know what I want.
I think I want to *do* something, to fight,
Or go to sea, or be a missionary,

SCENE I

Or go about the country, healing folk
Like you. Sometimes I want to die.

FRA ANGELO

Not yet, my brother. God has quite enough
Boys of your age to manage up in heaven,
And earth may find some labor for you yet.

RABELIN

You're making fun of me again!

FRA ANGELO

Of course.

My love were less the deep love that it is
If it were love unmixed with laughter.

RABELIN

(*Almost tearful.*)

Well,

I won't be laughed at, teased and patronized.
It may be sinful, but I'm not a saint,
And don't pretend to be, and I'm not meek,
Nor humble. Not a bit of it. I'm proud.
Some day or other we are bound to break.
It might as well be now.

THE HEART OF YOUTH

FRA ANGELO

Why, yes. Why, yes.

Freely you came and you shall freely go.

Give me your hand.

(RABELIN, *with his back turned toward him, makes no move to accept the proffered hand.*)

You won't? Why, then, good by.

I'm very sure that we shall meet again.

(*He goes out, centre back.*)

RABELIN

(*Tossing his head defiantly.*)

Oh, for a chance to show what I can do!

Anything! Just to show him. Anything!

If only some one'd fall into a river

While I was near, or there would come a war,

I'd make him swallow humble pie, I would!

(*He goes out, whistling desperately.*)

SCENE II

A PUBLIC SQUARE IN THE TOWN

(*A choir is heard chanting off stage. Enter the PAGE, left.*)

PAGE

(*Yawning and stretching.*)

“Watch and be ready,” said His Nibs the Duke.

“Run, Theobald, and fetch the holy man.

He may come soon. He may not come till
night.

Watch and be ready.” That’s all very well.

I’ve watched for seven blank and weary hours.

I don’t believe there is a holy man.

And even if there is, it’s ten to one

He’ll somehow circumnavigate this burg.

All the excitements do. I’m going to sleep.

Cathedral steps don’t make the softest bed.

But it’s a hard stone that’ll keep my brain

Working against my will. That holy man!

Pshaw! probably he’ll never come at all,

Or if he does — well, I’ll wake up in time.

Good night, proud world.

THE HEART OF YOUTH

(*He settles himself comfortably and drops to sleep.*
Again the choir may be faintly heard. From the left, enters a MAN ON CRUTCHES.)

THE MAN ON CRUTCHES

I wonder — will he come?

(*From the right, a VOICE is heard calling.*)

VOICE

Coming !

THE MAN ON CRUTCHES

Oh, where? Which way?

VOICE

Coming !

THE MAN ON CRUTCHES

Dear God !

(A BOY runs in from the right.)

BOY

He's here! He's in the town!

THE MAN ON CRUTCHES

He's here?

BOY

I saw

Him close as I see you. I saw him heal!

SCENE II

THE MAN ON CRUTCHES

Heal !

BOY

Yes. A woman. She was blind. He said —
(The great BELL of the cathedral close by begins to ring with eager, rejoicing strokes.)

THE MAN ON CRUTCHES

He's here !

(The PAGE moves restlessly, but settles down again into still sounder slumber. From the left and rear, MEN, WOMEN and CHILDREN, among them the halt, the lame and the blind, run in, crying excitedly to each other.)

VOICES

The bell ! He's here ! He's in the town !

This way ! Come, this way !

You're crowding me !

What do I care ?

He's coming this way.

I can't breathe !

Heal me !

He's coming ! He's coming ! He's coming !

THE HEART OF YOUTH

THE MAN ON CRUTCHES

Oh, wonderful !

(VOICES, *gaining in volume, are heard at right, then a throng presses in, shouting.*)

NEW VOICES

He's here !

THE OTHERS

He's here ! He's here !

(FRA ANGELO enters. *The crowd surges about him with shouts. The Cathedral CHOIR is heard again more loudly and dominantly than before.*)

VOICES

Heal me ! Holy man, heal me !

(RABELIN enters right and stands apart from the crowd, a little supercilious and bored.)

FRA ANGELO

(Gently.)

Peace, peace, good friends.

(The crowd parts and FRA ANGELO emerges.

THE MAN ON CRUTCHES, who has kept in the background, hobbles up to him.)

SCENE II

THE MAN ON CRUTCHES

(*Stretching out his hand.*)

Heal me!

FRA ANGELO

(*Gazing tenderly into his eyes.*)

You are healed.

THE MAN ON CRUTCHES

(*Stares incredulously, stretches his limbs wonderfully and suddenly lets his crutches fall with a cry.*)

Healed!

(*The cry is taken up by the others who surge about*

FRA ANGELO.)

FRA ANGELO

Come. Let us rest our hearts in God's good
house,

And speak with one another.

(*He goes out left, followed by the hushed and awe-struck crowd. RABELIN, startled out of his defiant mood by the healing of the cripple, stands motionless an instant, pondering.*)

THE HEART OF YOUTH

RABELIN

"You — are — healed."

Um. That seemed easy.

PAGE

(*At left, waking.*)

Is it morning yet?

RABELIN

Hello. What's here?

PAGE

Don't talk to me like that.

RABELIN

Say, who are you?

PAGE

I am the Duke's own page.

Remember that.

RABELIN

Pooh! What's a duke? I've been
A saint's companion, and I could be now,
If I'd been willing to endure his ways.
But he was — fresh, as teachers sometimes are,
And, well, I felt I was too old to stand
That sort of thing even from a holy man.

SCENE II

PAGE

A holy man?

RABELIN

(*Offhand.*)

Why, yes. They call him that.

Of course, when you go travelling with a man
You do see faults. But then, he's good, he's good.

PAGE

Say, it's a holy man I'm out to find.

When is he coming?

RABELIN

Why, he's come and gone.

PAGE

(*Jumping to his feet.*)

Gone!

RABELIN

You're a foolish virgin.

PAGE

Where'd he go?

RABELIN

Oh, you can't see him now. He's healing folk.

There's thousands clamoring to see him now.

THE HEART OF YOUTH

You'll have to wait in line. If things go right
He may be free to-morrow at this time.

PAGE

Oh, help a fellow, won't you? I'll be fired
If I come back without him. I sure will.
I've got to see the holy man.

RABELIN

What for?

PAGE

Well, some one wants him.

RABELIN

Who?

PAGE

(*Offhand.*)

Oh, just the Duke.

RABELIN

(*Impressed.*)

The Duke?

PAGE

For his sick daughter.

RABELIN

(*Fascinated.*)

What's her name?

SCENE II

PAGE

The Princess Arabis.

RABELIN

My, what a name!

The Princess Arabis —

PAGE

She's very sick.

RABELIN

She is?

PAGE

And awfully pretty. White and pink
Like a magnolia flower. And fun to talk to.

RABELIN

What did you say her name was?

PAGE

Arabis.

RABELIN

That's a sweet-smelling name.

PAGE

She's *very* ill.

Oh, please persuade the holy man — —

THE HEART OF YOUTH

RABELIN

Oh, no,

He's far too busy, and besides a duke
To him means no more than a beggar. But —
There might be others who could possibly —
What is the ailment? Measles?

PAGE

Worse than that.

RABELIN

Mumps?

PAGE

Oh, far worse.

RABELIN

Then chicken pox?

PAGE

No. Worse.

RABELIN

(*Dejected.*)

Then I'm afraid the saint had better not
Attempt to tackle it.

PAGE

Oh, he must come!

SCENE II

RABELIN

What *is* her ailment?

PAGE

No one seems to know.

She's drooping, fading, slowly, like a flower
That's thirsty.

RABELIN

(*Softly.*)

Arabis!

PAGE

I've heard them say

It's all because she wants to be a nun,
And the old Duke won't let her. That's absurd!
Who'd droop and pine away to be a nun?

RABELIN

(*Pondering.*)

Of course, a thing like that is easier
To heal than real diseases — mumps or such things.
It's barely possible the holy man
Might be persuaded, at a pinch, to come;
Since it's not mumps, or something serious,
But just —

THE HEART OF YOUTH

PAGE

The Duke said he'd pay well !

RABELIN

He did ?

PAGE

Yes. Heaps and heaps of gold.

RABELIN

Oh, wonderful !

PAGE

You bring the holy man and you'll get some.

RABELIN

(Carelessly.)

Oh, that's all right.

PAGE

I'll skip.

RABELIN

(Dreamily.)

Sweet Arabis !

Why, that's a flower's name.

PAGE

You'll make him come ?

SCENE II

RABELIN

(*Breathlessly.*)

Yes.

PAGE

Good for you. I'll go and tell the Duke.

(*He runs out right.*)

RABELIN

A Duke! A Princess! Princess Arabis!

A pining Princess! Heaps and heaps of gold!

It's like a fairy-story. (*Pause.*) "You — are — healed."

Why, it looks easy. Why not? Why, perhaps —

I might — I'm rather bright in other ways —

Who knows? Perhaps it's Opportunity

Banging at my front door. It is! It is!

It's the great chance to show what I can do,

To show the holy man — !

(A MONK *enters right, hurrying across the stage.*

RABELIN *impetuously stops him.*)

Hold on!

MONK

What's this?

RABELIN

Take off your cowl!

THE HEART OF YOUTH

MONK

My cowl?

RABELIN

Quick!

MONK

Please, sir, but —

RABELIN

I want it.

MONK

So do I.

RABELIN

Quick! Take it off!

MONK

I've only got a hair-shirt underneath!

RABELIN

I don't care. Quick!

(He strips the MONK of his cowl and quickly puts it on over his clothes. The MONK, in his brown hair-shirt, reaching to his knees, hurries out, right, calling, "Help! Robbers!")

Now, which way to the palace of the Duke?

(He looks right and left, then runs out, back.)

SCENE III

A DARK STREET

(Enter RABELIN, *stealthily, rear centre.*)

RABELIN

That's it. That must be it. Where is the gate?
How black and tall and hard and cold and stern
The walls rise up. There's not a tree, just
stones.

Beneath, above, about — a world of stone.
It makes me shiver. I'm not used to towns.
I wonder what the holy man would say
If he could see me now? It's getting dark.
How funny shadows act behind one's back!
They act alive, but not alive with people.
I'm not afraid of flesh and blood and bone,
Robbers and such things, nor of ghosts; but
these

Queer shifting shreds that are not ghosts nor men
Make me all goose-flesh. What was that? Good
Lord!

(FRA ANGELO *enters right.*)

THE HEART OF YOUTH

FRA ANGELO

Is that you, Rabelin?

(RABELIN *covers, but does not answer.*)

Is that you, brother?

I missed you and a something in my heart

Said that you needed me. And so I came.

RABELIN

(*Softly.*)

I do not need you.

FRA ANGELO

Then my heart was wrong.

RABELIN

Yes. Very probably.

FRA ANGELO

Why do you keep

Your face so hidden? Are there tales inscribed

On the truth-telling tablets of your eyes

You dare not let me read? Why do you hide?

Are you, a man of seventeen years, afraid?

SCENE III

RABELIN

(*Turning sharply.*)

I'm not afraid!

FRA ANGELO

What errand are you on?

RABELIN

What's that to you?

FRA ANGELO

Nothing — or everything.

RABELIN

Well, nothing then.

FRA ANGELO

There's something in your voice —

RABELIN

What of it?

FRA ANGELO

Rabelin, come back.

RABELIN

I won't.

FRA ANGELO

(*Laying his hands on RABELIN'S shoulders.*)

What deviltry is on you? There's a door

THE HEART OF YOUTH

Closed in the shadowy passage of your eyes.
You've slammed a door wherethrough I used to
pass.
You've slammed it in my face. Look up at me.
A wall! a wall! No passage for me now.
What mischief's brewing on the farther side?

RABELIN

What's that to you?

FRA ANGELO

I am your friend.

RABELIN

My friend!

My teacher's what you are and ever *will* be.
Because I came to you and asked to learn,
You've got a notion it's your heaven-sent job
Forever to look after me, to keep
My feet safe in the straight-and-narrow, watch
My very goings-out and comings-in
As though I was a girl at boarding school
And you my old-maid chaperone.

FRA ANGELO

Dear boy!

Look in my eyes. Am I a friend or not?

SCENE III

RABELIN

I tell you, I am sick of being taught
And led about like a tame elephant.
I know some things and now I'm going to live.
Perhaps I'm not the muddle-headed boy
You think I am, perhaps I am a man,
Perhaps I've got it in me to *do* things.
Let go! I've got my opportunity,
And opportunity comes only once!
Others have fought and won — at seventeen.
Why shouldn't I? Let go!

(FRA ANGELO *drops his hands from RABELIN'S shoulders.*)

Where is the gate?
I'm going to the palace of the Duke!
(*He runs out, left.*)

FRA ANGELO

The Duke! What! Not — to heal?
Youth, youth! Ah, God!
Be merciful to the wild heart of youth.
(*Exit.*)

SCENE IV

A ROOM IN THE DUKE'S PALACE

(*ALTHÆA enters right, tiptoes across stage, and stands at extreme left of stage as though listening at a door. She gives a sob. MELISSA enters, also crossing.*)

ALTHÆA

(*Softly.*)

Has the saint come?

MELISSA

Not yet.

ALTHÆA

I scarcely dare

Go back to her and say he hasn't come.

MELISSA

He's in the town.

ALTHÆA

I know. I heard the bell.

I can't see why he doesn't come — The Duke!

(*The DUKE enters right. The GIRLS curtsey deep.*)
My lord!

SCENE IV

MELISSA

My lord!

DUKE

(Cheerfully.)

What news?

MELISSA

No news, my lord.

She sobs and laughs and speaks of foolish things.

ALTHÆA

Oh, yield, my lord, before it is too late.

It is no sin to want to be a nun

And vow oneself to heaven.

DUKE

You too are young.

You do not understand such things. A child

Has whims like this that fade out and are gone.

I am not wholly selfish. I desire

To shield her from herself, to be her watchman

Against the intrusive enemies of youth.

ALTHÆA

It's not a whim, my lord. It is a call.

I know it is a call. To see her face

Is to be sure it is a call from God.

THE HEART OF YOUTH

DUKE

Spare me these arguments. Call the physician.

ALTHÆA

My lord, she's dying!

DUKE

Tush! Comfort yourself.

Girls do not die as patly as they faint,
When lovers or recalcitrant papas
Demand rebuke. My girl shall have the saint
She's crying for, to bring the red cheeks back.
She shall not have her convent. That is final.
Call the physician.

ALTHÆA

(*Drawing back.*)

Very good, my lord.

(*Sobbing, she goes out left, followed by MELISSA.*)

DUKE

Absurd, ingenuous, earnest heart of youth!

(*Enter the PHYSICIAN, left.*)

PHYSICIAN

My lord!

SCENE IV

DUKE

(*Lightly.*)

Well how's our young besieger?

PHYSICIAN

Sire?

DUKE

What spectres is she threatening me with now?

What bugaboos to force a stubborn parent?

PHYSICIAN

No bugaboos, my lord.

DUKE

You are too serious.

PHYSICIAN

It seems the hour demands it.

DUKE

Come, come. Laugh.

You must not trust her earnestness too much.

It is a children's ailment.

PHYSICIAN

Sire, I fear —

THE HEART OF YOUTH

DUKE

Don't be so serious, man.

PHYSICIAN

Ah, God in heaven,
She's dying !

DUKE

What ?

PHYSICIAN

I can do nothing more.

DUKE

What did you say ?

PHYSICIAN

Burnt out.
She's flickering, like a lamp,

DUKE

You're a physician, and you say
This dying is no empty threat of hers?
She's —

PHYSICIAN

She is dying.

SCENE IV

DUKE

Why! I must be mad.

This is against all reason! Men might die
For faith, conviction, men! But not young girls
Of sixteen years. You are absurd!

PHYSICIAN

I would I were.

My lord,

DUKE

I do not understand —

You say — why, it's absurd! Youth may be strange
And from its dewy inexperience weave
Amazing webs of whim; but even youth
Would balk at perpetrating such a travesty
Of reason and of life. You are all wrong;
Or else in league with her to break my will.
Which is it?

PHYSICIAN

Sire, I say what I have seen.

DUKE

I do not understand the heart of youth.
If she had been the praying kind, a prig,
Worried about salvation, bigoted,

THE HEART OF YOUTH

Mawkish, anaemic, anything except
The hearty, wholesome tomboy that she was,
Why, I might understand. A year ago,
One dusk, she saw a beautiful young nun.
That's all the stimulus there is. That's all.
But something opens in her, something shuts,
And suddenly the devil-boy is gone,
And she is all dreams, and deep-sparkling eyes,
Dreams, a long quarter-year ; then, overnight,
A blaze of faith. I said, she is a child ;
And laughed. She did not laugh. And I laughed
more

To see the grief she did not try to hide
That I should sin against the Holy Ghost
By ridiculing what to her was holy.
I said, this fever will be over soon.
And now you say she's — dying?

PHYSICIAN

So it seems.

DUKE

I did not know that children of her age
Could feel so deeply. When they laugh, they laugh
So like the sunlight, so like running water,

SCENE IV

So without any backward look toward pain,
I did not know that when they wept, their woe
Could tap the same cold, deep, eternal springs
That feed our older grief. I did not dream
Her spirit might be stronger than her flesh
And frown the body's youthful ardor down.
I grope in darkness. Youth bewilders me.
I cannot probe it, plumb it, comprehend
The meanings of the songs and silences
That shake its lovely temples into dust.
Dying, you say?

PHYSICIAN

(*With a helpless gesture.*)

My lord —

DUKE

Bring her in here,
Where she can see what light the day has left
For a bewildered world.

PHYSICIAN

(*Withdrawning.*)

I go.

(*He crosses to extreme left.*)

THE HEART OF YOUTH

DUKE

Dear heaven!

What an unmotivated farce is life—

Unless indeed — Where is the holy man?

PHYSICIAN

(*Returning.*)

They're bringing her, my lord.

DUKE

Good. You may go.

(*The PHYSICIAN bows and goes out back.*)

The holy man! Is he the answer? Ah!

(*Enter left, ALTHÆA, MELISSA, and FOUR other GIRLS, attendants on the PRINCESS ARABIS, bearing a cot on which ARABIS is lying. They set the cot down at left centre, forward, and group themselves about it.*)

ARABIS

(*Faintly.*)

It must be very late.

DUKE

The sun has set.

ARABIS

You promised that the holy man would come.

SCENE IV

DUKE

I sent for him. He was delayed, perhaps,
And will still come.

ARABIS

I fear he will not come.

DUKE

I sent a page to meet him.

ARABIS

Oh, I fear
The messenger forgot, or else the word
He bore from you lacked warmth. If the saint
knew

How much I want him he would come, I know.
There is so much I want to ask of him.
I think that I could live, if I saw him,
And he could tell me how to make my way
Through this most difficult thicket. Why, it
seemed

As though all weakness faded like the dark
At your mere word that he might come. The sun
Was high then. That was long ago. And now
The night comes on, and he has not yet come.

THE HEART OF YOUTH

I'm hot and very tired.

You see, if Christ
Called, and I did not come, and up in heaven
My mother heard him call, and stood by him
Waiting for me to answer all night long —

ALTHÆA

She's wandering again.

ARABIS

(*Dreamily.*)

What did you say?

ALTHÆA

Sleep, sleep, my Arabis.

ARABIS

I can't. You know
Mother is weeping, for she hasn't heard
The sound of all sweet sounds she wants to hear.
And Christ is saying, "Never mind, don't cry,
She'll answer soon." But mother's half afraid
I never will —

DUKE

Oh, child, you break my heart!

SCENE IV

ARABIS

I try to call and try to call, and can't.

(*The PAGE enters.*)

PAGE

My lord !

DUKE

He's here?

PAGE

He's in the town, my lord.

DUKE

Not here?

ALTHÆA

Not here?

ARABIS

(*Faintly.*)

Not here ?

PAGE

He's on his way.

I dare say, any minute he'll be here.

ARABIS

What did he say? —

ALTHÆA

He's coming, Arabis !

THE HEART OF YOUTH

DUKE

(*To PAGE.*)

Bring him up quickly when he comes.

(*Exit PAGE.*)

ALTHÆA

The saint —

The holy man — he's coming.

ARABIS

(*With a long, glad sigh.*)

Oh !

MELISSA

Listen !

ALTHÆA

He'll just say, *Rise!* And you'll get on your feet.

MELISSA

Listen ! It won't be long before you'll hear
His footsteps now.

ALTHÆA

Listen ! Was that a step ?

MELISSA

First on the stair, then in the corridor —

ALTHÆA

Then at the door —

SCENE IV

MELISSA

And then here in the room!

ARABIS

Yes. And he'll cry, *Arise!*

DUKE

(*Aside.*)

Oh, heart of youth!

MELISSA

And you'll be up on your two feet again.

ARABIS

And strong, you think?

ALTHÆA

Of course. And with red cheeks.

MELISSA

And all the hair you lost will come again
Just twice as beautiful. It's always so
In story-books.

ARABIS

(*Dreamily.*)

I don't care about hair.

THE HEART OF YOUTH

ALTHÆA

Listen! I heard a knocking at the gate!

ARABIS

I heard it, too!

MELISSA

Listen! They've drawn the bolt!

I heard it grate.

ALTHÆA

There! Did you hear the chain?

DUKE

(Crossing swiftly to back.)

Steps!

MELISSA

On the stair!

ALTHÆA

Louder and louder now!

ARABIS

(Faintly.)

Steps!

MELISSA

Oh, it's he!

SCENE IV

ALTHÆA

The holy man!

ARABIS

Dear mother,

Help me to do my share.

DUKE

(Softly.)

Good God, have mercy.

PAGE

(Reëntering.)

My lord, the holy man —

DUKE

Let him come in.

ARABIS

At last!

MELISSA

Now in a minute you'll be well.

(RABELIN, disguised, enters. The PAGE goes out.

The DUKE, ALTHÆA and MELISSA fall on their knees.)

RABELIN

(Uncomfortably.)

Please — please get up.

THE HEART OF YOUTH

DUKE

(*Kissing RABELIN's hand as he rises.*)

Father —

RABELIN

(*A wed.*)

Are you the Duke?

DUKE

I am.

RABELIN

You know, you mustn't kiss my hand.

DUKE

Forgive.

RABELIN

I will.

ALTHÆA

(*Softly to MELISSA.*)

A curious holy man.

DUKE

Here is my daughter.

RABELIN

(*Approaching the cot.*)

Oh!

SCENE IV

DUKE

I think my page
Told you our sorrow. Yet you seem surprised.

RABELIN

(*Softly.*)
She's very beautiful.

DUKE

Without, within.
Her body is no fairer than her soul.

ARABIS

I wish it were so.

RABELIN

(*To DUKE.*)
Wait outside the door.

(*The DUKE retires to the right, ALTHÆA and ME-LISSA and ATTENDANTS to the left.*)

ARABIS

You're very young. I thought all saints were old.

RABELIN

I'm — older — than I look.

ARABIS

I'm glad.

THE HEART OF YOUTH

RABELIN

But years

Don't count in matters of this kind, of course.
It's what we've learned from worry and the knocks
Of hard experience that counts, not years.
You'll understand when you have lived. Of course,
It's easy to be good, before you know
The fun of being wicked —

ARABIS

(*Bewildered.*)

You are strange.

You say so much that I can't understand.

RABELIN

You're young. When you have lived —

ARABIS

When I have lived,

It won't much matter, will it, what is said
On earth? For I will understand the words
The angels speak to one another in heaven,
And need no lesser understanding.

RABELIN

Still,

Experience —

SCENE IV

ARABIS

Oh, I am sick of words.
My head burns. Why are you so different
From what I dreamed?

RABELIN

How — different?

ARABIS

(*Staring.*)

He's standing on the crystal wall of heaven
Telling my mother, "Wait. She will speak soon.
Listen. Above the roaring of the world
Can you not hear the voice of Arabis?"
I try to speak and can't. Oh, holy man,
Help me to speak !

RABELIN

She's very sick.

ARABIS

Oh, mother!

Why can't I speak?

RABELIN

(In fear.)

Suppose —

THE HEART OF YOUTH

ARABIS

(*Conscious again.*)

What did you say?

RABELIN

(*Relieved.*)

She's clear again!

ARABIS

If I could see your eyes
I might gain strength. I feel so limp and weak.
It's always in the eyes God has his seat.
Perhaps, if I could look into your eyes —

RABELIN

(*Turning his head away, softly to himself.*)

What have I done?

ARABIS

You will not let me look.

(*She begins to weep softly.*)

RABELIN

(*Kneeling impetuously at her bedside.*)

Don't cry. Forgive me. Oh, don't cry! You
wrench
The living heart right out of me. Don't cry.
Look in my eyes.

SCENE IV

ARABIS

I can't see, for these tears.

RABELIN

Oh, please don't cry.

ARABIS

You are so different
From what I hoped and longed for. I was sure
The holy man who healed folk would heal me.
I did not wish to live until I heard
That you were near with healing in your eyes.
I knew how you would guide my strengthened feet.
And when I heard you on the stair, I said,
“One minute more and he will come, and stand
Beside my bed and lift his hands, and cry,
Arise! and I will rise, healed.” — Such a dream!

RABELIN

(*Urgently.*)

Don't be afraid. I — know the way — it's done.
Of course, you shall be healed.

(*Faintly, as he draws back.*)

Oh, close those eyes!

They burn into my conscience !

THE HEART OF YOUTH

ARABIS

I believe !

By God's dear grace, I know I can be healed.
Oh, I believe, believe, believe.

RABELIN

(*Aside.*)

Dear God !

I'll serve you ever after ! Give me help !

ARABIS

I know I can be healed.

RABELIN

(*Faintly, apprehensively.*)

Rise. You are healed !

ARABIS

(*With a glad cry.*)

Healed !

(*She tries to raise herself, struggles and falls back,
struggles upward again, and again falls back.*)

Give me strength ! Oh, give me faith !

RABELIN

(*Prayerfully.*)

God ! God !

SCENE IV

ARABIS

(*With a last supreme effort.*)

Mother! If you could only hear me, hear —

(*She falls back, unconscious.*)

RABELIN

(*Flinging himself on his knees beside her.*)

What is it? Are you tired? Are you asleep?

What is it? Speak! Oh, answer, answer! Speak!

Oh, do not lie so silent and so white!

Your cheek is cold. Your hand is cold and
limp.

Arabis! princess! Princess Arabis!

Oh, beautiful sweet flower, Arabis!

The last tears that she shed are not yet dry

Upon her cheek. Oh, wake! Why do you
sleep

So soundly? Wake.

(*He shakes her gently.*)

Oh, wake! I beg. Oh, wake!

I see my sin! You've punished me enough,

Sweet Arabis. Forgive. Relent. Relent!

Oh, punish me no more with those closed eyes,

THE HEART OF YOUTH

Those cold, limp hands! She's fainted.

(*Calling.*)

Some one! Help!

(*Enter the DUKE, right.*)

DUKE

What is it?

RABELIN

Water! Quick! Some one bring water!

DUKE

(*Kneeling beside the bed.*)

She's dead!

RABELIN

No, no, not that, not that!

(*ALTHAEA and MELISSA enter left. ALTHAEA brings water.*)

ALTHAEA

Here's water!

(*They bathe ARABIS'S face.*)

DUKE

What have you done? What evil —

RABELIN

No, no, no!

Nothing! She lives. She's tired. That's all.

She sleeps.

SCENE IV

ALTHÆA

I cannot hear her heart beat.

MELISSA

Is she dead?

RABELIN

No, no! She shall be healed. She shall rise up.

(*On his knees in pleading prayer.*)

Dear God! Forgive. Forgive. Make her rise up.

I did not mean such wickedness. Ah, God,

I did not mean it. I'll be good! I swear.

Humble and good. Oh, this time, save me, God!

I thought, I really thought that I could heal.

If I deceived, oh, I deceived myself

As well as her. Oh, heal her, God! I'll pray

Until you must relent. Oh, you'll not wreck

Two lives for one impulsive moment. I —

Just did not understand. I was not bad.

Just vain and proud.

DUKE

(*At left, motioning the HANDMAIDENS outside.*)

Bear her into her chamber.

(*The HANDMAIDENS enter.*)

THE HEART OF YOUTH

RABELIN

Not yet.

(*At the bedside.*)

Sweet Arabis, shake off that slumber.

You are so beautiful, you must be kind.

Surely behind your beautiful white face

Are mercy and relenting. Wake, oh, wake!

I did not mean to wrong you. Oh, be merciful!

Wake! Wake! She does not stir — she's — Oh!

she's — look! —

(*Staggering backwards.*)

Fra Angelo! Fra Angelo! Fra Angelo!

I need you!

DUKE

(*Rigid and cold.*)

Bear the princess to her chamber.

RABELIN

(*Clutching the DUKE'S arm.*)

Send for Fra Angelo! Cry through the streets.

Send for the holy man.

DUKE

Why, what are you?

SCENE IV

RABELIN

(*Flinging off his cowl.*)

I am a sham, a fraud, a murderer!

DUKE

(*Retreating in horror.*)

Oh, base, base, base!

(*The HANDMAIDENS surge indignantly toward RABELIN.*)

Let no one touch the man.

There are diseases of the soul in him

Who cheats in God's name. Go! I have no sword
To reach the depths where those diseases root.

Go! Let the earth unclose and cover you.

I will not stain my sword with sulphur. Go!

(*The DUKE goes out, left, followed by ALTHÆA,
MELISSA and the other HANDMAIDENS, bearing
ARABIS.*)

RABELIN

(*Stumbling after them.*)

Not all, all base. I swear it. Arabis!

(*He falls down and remains lying in an attitude of
lifeless despair. ALTHÆA appears left.*)

THE HEART OF YOUTH

ALTHÆA

(*Calling.*)

Physician! Come! Physician! Oh, where is he?

(*She crosses to the back and calls.*)

Page! Page!

(*The PAGE enters back.*)

PAGE

Yes, lady?

ALTHÆA

Run. Fetch the physician.

(*The PAGE disappears again. ALTHÆA crosses to the left and goes out.*)

RABELIN

(*Flinging himself over on his back.*)

What have I done? (Pause.) Oh, God! What have I done?

(*The PHYSICIAN enters back and swiftly crosses and disappears left.*)

Who's that? He's gone. To her, perhaps. To her.

If only I could wash out of my eyes

SCENE IV

The look she gave me. Oh, the heights and deeps
Of that reproach! It was as though she cried,
“I wanted strength and you had none to give me.
I wanted God, and you had only words.”
The sorrow in her eyes. The pain!

(ALTHÆA reënters, left.)

ALTHÆA

(Calling.)

Lights!

(Crossing to back.)

Lights!

RABELIN

(Clutching ALTHÆA’s dress.)

Has she awaked?

ALTHÆA

(Startled.)

Who’s there?

RABELIN

Has she awaked?

ALTHÆA

No.

RABELIN

Oh!

ALTHÆA

Poor boy!

(Exit.)

THE HEART OF YOUTH

RABELIN

Oh, God! (*Pause.*) Dear God!

I really thought that I could heal. Forgive.
I did not know that men must heal themselves
Before they dare stretch out their hands to heal
The other sick. I know now. Oh, I know!

(*PAGES appear carrying torches that flare and flame eerily in the gathering dusk. THEY cross the stage and go out left.*)

Forgive! See, I am punished. You have whipped
My spirit, God, my heart, with a barbed whip.
I'll not be proud again, or vain, or stubborn.
I'll serve, I'll learn, I'll labor. You shall know —

(*He rises to his feet with a sudden consciousness of new strength and resolution.*)

God, you shall know you need teach Rabelin
His lesson — only once.

(*He stands upright, victorious. Enter, right, FRA ANGELO.*)

FRA ANGELO

You called. I came.

RABELIN

(*Without turning.*)

I knew that you would come.

SCENE IV

FRA ANGELO

Why, yes, of course.

A friend comes when he's called.

RABELIN

(Deeply stirred.)

A friend?

FRA ANGELO

(Taking RABELIN'S two hands in his and looking deep into his eyes.)

A friend.

(RABELIN sinks slowly down at FRA ANGELO'S feet. FRA ANGELO lays his hands gently on the boy's head.)

If there are any shades in God's deep love
I do believe His deepest love goes out
To the tormented, irresponsible,
Gay, eager, burning, foolish heart of youth.

(HE drops his hands; RABELIN remains motionless.

FRA ANGELO crosses softly to the left and goes out.
In the distance, the CHOIR of the Cathedral may be heard again chanting. From the left, PAGES, bearing torches, stumble in, startled.)

THE HEART OF YOUTH

A PAGE

Who — who was that?

(*The PHYSICIAN enters, confused.*)

PHYSICIAN

Who was it?

PAGE

I don't know.

(*The DUKE enters, followed a moment later by ALTHÆA and MELISSA and the other ATTENDANTS all in more or less confusion.*)

DUKE

Strange!

PHYSICIAN

Do you know him, sire?

DUKE

I could not tell.

The place was dark.

PHYSICIAN

I stood beside the bed.

He came into the room and looked at me —

SCENE IV

DUKE

My tongue was lamed that tried to challenge him.
His eyes —

ALTHÆA

His eyes !

MELISSA

His wonderful, deep eyes !

PHYSICIAN

(*A wed.*)

Sire, was that — Death ?

DUKE

Strange, strange ! But no — not Death !

RABELIN

(*With a cry of understanding.*)

The stars are out. That's why he's strange. The
stars !

DUKE

You ! You here ?

RABELIN

Yes —

THE HEART OF YOUTH

DUKE

(*To PAGES.*)

Seize him. Take him away!

Take him away before I murder him.

Take him away —

ALTHÆA

Look !

MELISSA

Heaven !

DUKE

What's that—white thing?

(*The PAGES who have laid hands on RABELIN retreat with confused exclamations. The DUKE, PHYSICIAN, ALTHÆA, MELISSA, TORCH-BEARERS and HANDMAIDENS stand huddled in an amazed group, in centre stage. Out of the dusk at left appears ARABIS, looking very slender and white, and moves slowly toward RABELIN. He steps aside startled. The OTHERS cry out and retreat stumblingly before her.*)

SCENE IV

ARABIS

Don't run away from me. I'm not a ghost.

(*The GROUP draws back yet further, in panic.*)

He said, *Awake!* and I awoke. He said,

Arise! and like a new, fresh wind

Life seemed to fill my sails, and I — came forth.

DUKE

God pity me. My child. My poor, dead child !

ARABIS

Don't say such things. I'm really not a ghost.

Touch me. I am alive ! I'm strong, I'm well !

PHYSICIAN

It is her ghost.

ALTHÆA

Poor Arabis !

ARABIS

Oh, dear !

Has no one faith enough to think that God

Could raise a sick girl up ?

THE HEART OF YOUTH

RABELIN

(Who has been watching her, spell-bound with wonder and growing ecstasy.)

Yes. Yes. Yes.

(HE goes toward her with slow, hesitating steps and fixed eyes.)

See. I believe. I knew that you would live.

(Touching his heart.)

In here I knew. When God sent me my friend,
I knew that He forgave, and you would live.

ARABIS

(Tenderly.)

You? Who are you?

RABELIN

I did an evil thing.

ARABIS

Oh, I remember now. And yet — and yet —
You do not look as though your heart were base.
I scarce remember what you did to me.
I only know, in some black desert, hung
Between the stars and earth, you gave me pain.

SCENE IV

But that is past, and worse things I'd forgive,
Because you knew that I was not a ghost.
To think a boy would know more than all these!

RABELIN

(*Kneeling before her.*)
Oh, lady, let me serve you.

ARABIS

(*With childlike eagerness.*)
Why, indeed.
I'll tell my father. He must make a place
For you somewhere, so we can talk together
Of many things I dream of and half see,
Things you'll be glad to hear about, I know,
For you have friendly eyes.

(*SHE chatters on, absorbed. The OTHERS draw nearer as they slowly realize that SHE is actually alive.*)

A thousand things!
My head's just full of things to talk about.
I want to know what you think about life
And God and convents. Do you know, I think
That one can serve the Lord in other ways
Than in a nunnery.

THE HEART OF YOUTH

DUKE

Child, it is you!

ALTHAEA

(*Touching ARABIS timidly.*)

She's real.

MELISSA

She's living!

ARABIS

Why, of course, of course!

But it is strange to be back in the world.

Where is the holy man?

DUKE

Go. Bring him here.

(*The PHYSICIAN goes out left.*)

RABELIN

(*To DUKE.*)

Forgive me.

DUKE

(*Giving him his hand.*)

Yes. I do forgive you.

SCENE IV

ARABIS

(*Crying sharply.*)

Oh!

DUKE

What is it? Speak.

ARABIS

(*Mysteriously.*)

He is not in my room.

I felt a gentle wind blow through my heart.

He's gone.

PHYSICIAN

(*Reëntering.*)

He is not there.

DUKE

Not in the room?

ARABIS

(*Softly.*)

There is no door but this!

RABELIN

Not in the room?

ALTHÆA

Not in the room?

MELISSA

Not in the room?

THE HEART OF YOUTH

PHYSICIAN

He's gone.

DUKE

(To PHYSICIAN.)

The windows there are barred. There's no way out
But this, but this, no way but through this room !
If you say, he's not there —

ARABIS

(*Awe-struck.*)

Who — was — he ?

DUKE

Yes.

Who — was — he ?

RABELIN

Why, my friend, of course ! My friend !

(*Grasping a torch.*)

Come ! Come ! We'll find him !

ARABIS

Take me with you !

DUKE

Lights !

(THEY surge forth with their torches into the night.)

SCENE IV

RABELIN

Come! (*More distantly.*) Come!

(*From afar off, but clearly, like a challenge.*)

Come!

(*Numberless torches appear, following RABELIN up the steep incline and out of sight. From a distance the cathedral CHOIR may be heard again, singing first softly, then more and more triumphantly, until the swelling music of the hymn dominates all other sounds, finally drowning out even RABELIN's distant call.*)

Come! Come! Come!

Hymn

Out of pain and black disaster,
Hear our voices, mighty Master!
Fires of hell rise round and sear us,
Lord in love and pity, hear us!
War and torment roar, assailing,
Sick with sorrow, earth is wailing.
Trampled, broken, bleeding, dying,
Lord, for Thee our hearts are crying!

THE HEART OF YOUTH

Lord, in pride we scorned to heed Thee,
Boasting, "God, we do not need Thee !
We, to whom all earth is given,
What have we to ask of Heaven ?
Soaring, delving, warring, slaying,
What have we to do with praying?"
Lord, forgive the mad words spoken.
Lord, behold ! Our pride is broken.

Lord, with hearts abrased and burning,
See, Thy beaten sons returning !
Blind with smoke and bent with grieving,
Hungry, tattered — but believing !
See, we gather round about Thee,
Failures, failures, Lord, without Thee !
Take us, Lord. These hands, O take them !
Breathe upon our souls and wake them.

Lord, we fell in our defiance.
Look ! With Thee we stand as giants !
Lord, we perished, burning, rending,
Lord, with Thee is battle's-ending !
Lord, with Thee, the darkness dwindleth,
Lord, with Thee, the daylight kindles.

HYMN

Lord, we faint without Thee. Feed us!

Lord, we fail without Thee. Lead us!

Lead us, Lord!

Lead us, Lord!

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